



HIS HIGHNESS SIR RANBIR SINGH, SECOND MAHARAJA OF KASHMIR

ROYAL INDIA

*A descriptive and historical study
of India's fifteen principal States
and their Rulers*

BY

MAUD DIVER

Amid the levelling tendencies of the day, the inevitable monotony of Government on scientific lines, the Princes of India keep alive traditions and customs. They sustain the virility and save from extinction the picturesqueness of ancient and noble races. They have that indefinable quality endearing them to the people that arises from being born of the soil. Above all—especially in Rajputana—they constitute a school of manners . . . and show in the persons of their Chiefs that illustrious lineage has not ceased to implant noble and chivalrous ideas, fine standard of public spirit and private courtesy, which have always been instinctive in the aristocracy of India.

With the loss of these—if ever they be allowed to disappear, Indian society would go to pieces like a dismantled vessel in a storm.

LORD CURZON

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TO
THE PRINCES OF INDIA

IN SINCERE ADMIRATION
FOR ALL THAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED
BY THEIR ORDER FROM AGE TO AGE
FOR THE WELFARE OF THEIR GREAT COUNTRY

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED BY

A LOVER OF INDIA

AUTHOR'S NOTE

WITHIN the limits of this book, I have attempted portraits of certain distinguished Maharajas and their immediate predecessors. I would merely add that the varying length of my chapters on each State bears no relation to its size or importance. It merely means that, in some cases, more material has been available than in others; and I am confined by space to a few of the greater Princes.

I have tried, as far as may be, to keep clear of politics and controversial themes; but—as I have written elsewhere—‘in India politics have become an epidemic; though, after all, the problems of India’s relation with England out-soar mere politics. It may decide the future of Europe and Asia. There are fine minds at work on both sides, but there are too many tongues.’

In my first and last chapters these things must, of necessity, play a leading part; and also in my study of a Prince, who has devoted to them all his mental gifts and magnificent energy—the Maharaja of Bikanir.

I gratefully acknowledge the help I have received from the India Office Library, from Sir Stuart Fraser, K.C.S.I., Sir Henry Lawrence, K.C.S.I., Miss E. L. Tottenham, Mr. C. A. Kincaid, C.V.O., and Colonel Graham Seton Hutchison, D.S.O., M.C., for allowing me to quote from his Monarchical Federation plan for all India. My thanks are due also to the *Asiatic Review* for leave to use part of an article on the Indian Princes and the War.

I wish to add that I have no ‘axe to grind’. This book has been written at the request of my American publishers, and my sole concern has been to present a living portrayal of Royal India to the best of my ability.

Parkstone : 1942

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GUIDE TO PRONOUNCING VOWEL SOUNDS AND CERTAIN NAMES

ā—arn	i—ee	ai—as <i>i</i> in vine
a—u in 'but'	ir—eer	o—as in note
é—as <i>ai</i>	in—een	u—oo

Gwalior—pronounce as Gwollia
 Udaipur—pronounce as Oodypore
 Nāwanagar—pronounce as Nowanugga
 Méwar—pronounce as Maiwa
 Begum—pronounce as Baigum

Mrs. Maud Diver writes of India with insight, sympathy and understanding. Through her father she is connected with the Lawrences of the Punjab. Her Life of Honoria Lawrence—wife of Sir Henry Lawrence of Punjab, Rajputana and Lucknow fame—was commended by critics as a 'book of outstanding merit', a classic of its kind. She has personal knowledge of the country. Her father, Colonel C. H. T. Marshall, served in the Punjab as soldier-civilian and Political Officer for thirty-five years.

The Princes above named will find in this volume a vivid and sympathetic portrayal of their States, their history, their problems, with a full recognition of the part they are clearly destined to play in the coming era, after the War.

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THE recent important interlude of the definite offer to India, from His Majesty's Government, seems to call for a brief allusion, since it clearly set forth the readiness of that Government to recognise and accept, immediately after the War, a working constitution framed by Indians themselves : in effect, the creation of an Indian Union that would become a Dominion, to be associated in complete equality, with all other Dominions, in allegiance to the Crown : an offer as generous as it was genuine. To quote *The Times* : ' The significance of the plan lies in the attempt to realise freedom through unity and unity through consent ' : a proffered plan that had at least the merit of making clear to the world at large the patent stumbling-blocks to any practical form of settlement that must rest on that fair-sounding basis.

In sentiment all parties hailed the prospect of Dominion Status ; but discussion of actualities revealed as usual a wide divergence of views among the various Leagues involved. It is too often forgotten that, for India, any form of democracy—in the true sense of the word—automatically involves Hindu domination. The rule of *demos* is majority rule ; and 68 per cent of India's population is Hindu. But the obstinate fact remains that Moslems will not be ruled by Hindus or Sikhs ; Sikhs will not be ruled in Pakistan by Moslems ; Hindus will not be ruled by Moslems ; the Princes will not be overruled by politicians of British India. ' Yet any offer to get Britain out of India must contemplate these things. . . . ' No wonder the general public often feels bewildered as to what the ' much speaking ' is all about.

To take the Princes—with whom this book is mainly concerned—their Chamber at once passed a resolution declaring that they would in no way oppose India's attainment of Dominion Status, including a common allegiance to the Crown. Yet they could not be other than concerned at the prospect of reduced representation for themselves and the possibility of a self-governing British India being established without their accession to it : a development that might endanger their whole political future.

Result : after weeks of interminable talk—that may or may not have clarified the issue—the situation remains practically unchanged. True, India's fighting spirit has been intensified ; but nothing has occurred to modify all that has been written and proposed in the last chapter.

The palm still rests with the Princes for sanity of outlook and recognition of realities too often obscured by political phraseology and the need to make out a case for the prevailing point of view.

I cannot do better than refer the reader to the sane words spoken by the Maharaja of Bikanir on p. 273 and in other parts of that chapter ; to the practical conclusions of that notable Moslem Ruler, the Nawab of Bhopāl (p. 277) ; and, not least, to the dictum of India's great and wise reformer Prince, Sir Shahu Chhatrapati of Kolhapur : ' The gift of democratic government may be made or withheld by Parliament ; but no such gift will cause the growth of democracy in India. Educate, educate. . . . Only by means of social progress can political progress become a natural growth from within. '

But education takes time ; and politicians are apt to be in a hurry, often to the detriment of their country and their cause.

April 1942

ROYAL INDIA : WHAT IT HAS BEEN AND WHAT IT IS

Always, in speaking of India, one must remember the great variety of human characteristics and natural conditions that it comprises. Those who know . . . can claim with assurance that there exists between certain sections of the Indian people and the British a sense of common service, common ideals and loyalties. . . . Of the Princes it may be said that they belong to the British 'family', and feel personal loyalty to the Sovereign as warm as that of any Briton.—SIR GEORGE SCHUSTER.

In India it is the intangible that grips a man's thoughts and controls his actions ; and unless we look at India through Eastern as well as Western eyes, we shall look at her askant.—MAJOR-GENERAL J. F. C. FULLER, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.

I

THE chief ruling Princes of India—their names and fame and devotion to the British Crown—are familiar, more or less, in almost every country of the world. In England and India the greatest among them are known individually, if only by repute or through the Press. Men of high standing and personal experience frankly regard them as 'one of the most astonishing facts in their own continent or any other': a unique survival from bygone days. Nowhere else could one find, in this twentieth century, so attractive a blend of ancient and modern : rulers enjoying all the privilege, power and prestige of autocrats, yet freed, through their allegiance to the British Crown, from all risk of serious trouble within or without their domains.

For over two thousand years India's kingly ideal has proved its survival value ; proved also that the moderate-sized kingdom is better suited to Indian tradition and temperament than the larger, unwieldy Provinces of much-administered British India.

The States themselves, under enlightened Maharajas, are no mere anachronisms, as they are often styled by the politically-minded of both races. Changing in form, but not in fundamentals, they have shown, and are showing, a power of adaptation that qualifies them to survive. The best of their rulers have reached a high standard of duty and responsibility. Many of them have adopted Western dress, yet they remain, as a whole, picturesque personalities ; their outlook still feudal in the finer sense of the word ; famed for their fabulous jewels, their hospitality on the grand scale and, not least, for their devotion to the Crown of England.

Princes we call them, since they owe allegiance to the King-

Emperor, but the fine-sounding title 'Maharaja' means Great King, as many of them are indeed; lesser Princes being entitled Raja or Nawab. All told, they number some six hundred principalities; ranging in size from Hyderabad—almost as large as France—to feudal areas little bigger than a private estate; ranging also in mentality and outlook from the mediaeval baron to the modern Prince, who sees himself as the father of his people. Of such are the best known Rulers: Hyderabad, Kashmir, Mysore, Baroda, Gwalior and the Rajput soldier-statesman, Bikanir. England does not forget how the forebears of these Princes stood by their Queen-Empress in the critical days of the Mutiny; even as they flung all their resources into the two later world conflicts between 'the spirit of force and the forces of the spirit'.

In view of all that they are—and of the important part they may play in creating the India of to-morrow—it seems worth trying to present a living picture of these born rulers, through the varied record of their history and lineage and the influences that have moulded their destinies. Though of late years a good many books have been written on the subject of the greater Princes, most of them have been political; and few, if any, have the personal touch of Sir Walter Lawrence in his delightful book, *The India We Served*, or of Miss Tottenham in her *Highnesses of Hindostan*.

Even the British in India, with notable exceptions, have little more than a surface knowledge of the States. In social and military circles they are mainly connected with tourists and *tamāshas*, big game shooting and unlimited hospitality; though, in these days, they have become more widely known for what they are—cultivated and travelled men, often keen sportsmen, who fraternise with their guests, like any English host, and even dine at the same table. Increasingly they tend to discard rigid caste rules that hamper social life and progressive ambition.

So varied are they, in type, outlook and personality, that the vice of generalising is more than ever liable to give false impressions of a loyal and gallant body of men.

Outside India, even among educated readers, fantastic and piquant stories are more easily swallowed than unromantic facts. The mere phrase 'Eastern potentate' suggests a background of Arabian nights, dancing girls, jewels and wealth. The jewels and wealth are true enough of some; but they do not imply that any Maharaja sits down to breakfast covered with diamonds and rubies, or spends his substance on riotous living.

The Princes themselves, and their whole position in the country, are very imperfectly understood. How many people realise that Indian India is not, and never has been, British terri-

tory ; that thousands of bankers, merchants and financiers in Bombay and Calcutta are subjects of Indian States ; that the ubiquitous moneylender is usually a Marwari from Jaipur ; that one-third of India and a quarter of her peoples belong to Rulers, who are allies by treaty with the British Crown.

For a clear view of their position, they need to be seen in historical perspective : and India's perspective—history merging into legend—covers close on three thousand years.

Hindu India can look back to a Northern Buddhist Empire more than three hundred years before Christ, to a Golden Age that flourished for a hundred and fifty years ; offset by two centuries of unrecorded darkness. Followed the long-drawn tragedy of invasion on invasion ; the crash of empires ; eight hundred years of anarchy, sharpened by fierce religious feuds and fanaticisms, not wholly resolved even to-day.

The tidal wave of Aryans from the uplands of Central Asia proved all to the good for India's future development. A fair race, fine and warlike as their Rajput descendants, they conquered more than half of northern India, thrusting the Dravidians back and back into the south. Left in peace for a little matter of a thousand years, they evolved a religion, or rather a priestly social system, based on caste—in effect, Hinduism ; a system by which the whole sub-continent is dominated to the present day.

They gave India the brilliant era of Rajput dominion : a number of small kingdoms ruled by Chiefs of a great military caste, kept singularly pure by the strictest rules as to marriage and status ; their men kept virile and courageous by the exercise of sport in every form, not least the kingly sport of war, as it was waged in a more barbarous yet a more chivalrous age. 'A triumph of human breeding', Count Keyserling has called them ; and Hindu India did well in evolving these Rajputs—Sons of Kings—who were to prove its mainstay against a more formidable invasion than any yet.

For now, in the eighth century, there came crusading out of Asia the world's great fighting races—Arabs and Turks, Tartars and Afghans ; red-hot fanatics, vowed to slay all infidels who could not be persuaded or coerced into accepting the non-idolatrous creed of God and his Prophet.

In this violent fashion began the thousand-year feud between Hindu and Moslem—a fierce and fundamental antagonism, hardly to be realised by those who are not familiar with the all-pervading religious atmosphere of India.

To give Western minds a partial idea of the age-long clash between the two creeds that dominate India, one may roughly compare Hindu with Roman Catholic forms of worship—elaborate

ritual, images of gods, and sanctified priesthood ; while the Moslem, like the Protestant, worships God direct and sees all men as equal in His sight, at prayer-time and meal-time—the last being a religious function in the East. But, in truth, the cleavage cuts far deeper ; and it must be remembered that, in India, religion permeates the whole of life as it rarely does in the West.

The Moslem creed—conceived by an obscure Arab in the seventh century—is, in essence, a fighting faith ; and, as such, was destined to challenge the world. The Mogul dream of wholesale dominion, in part fulfilled, was only frustrated by the combined valour and diplomacy of the Rajputs, who may fairly be said to have saved Hindu India ; their supreme claim to renown.

Even so, initial sweeping victories enabled the Moguls to found an Empire, centred in Delhi, that astonished East and West alike, and survived for two hundred years.

The Rajputs, refusing to admit defeat, set up small proud kingdoms in oases of the great Indian desert, now known as Rajputana. Of these there were three chief principalities : Méwar, with its capital city of Udaipur, Jaipur and the desert State of Jōdhpur. In their courts these Rajput Rulers preserved Aryan traditions and culture, while the Brahmins stiffened the spiritual barrier of caste against the oppressor, convinced that ‘ the age of despair ’ could not last for ever.

It could not. Even while the Mogul power was at its height, adventurers from a small and distant island were scouring the seas. A certain Francis Drake had rounded the Cape of Good Hope and ‘ navigated the globe ’—as then known. England, even now, hardly realises the quality of those simple seamen, who carried on Queen Elizabeth’s tradition through the discouraging days of James the First.

‘ Their ships though heavily gunned, were small. When food and water failed, it was chance work replenishing them. Every port was armed and hostile ; every ship an enemy to be fought or run from. (But the English seldom ran.) To reach India was to sail into a nest of wasps. For they sailed as poachers and pirates outside the law ; and navigation was all sheer guess work.’ Yet a tale of the wonders they achieved, against odds—the birth of the East India Company and all that sprang from it—would in itself fill more than one book.

It was in September 1599 that eighty City merchants, pledged to the venture, met in Founders’ Hall ; and on the last day of that year their Charter was signed by Queen Elizabeth, as ‘ merchants of London, travelling to the East Indies ’.

At a time when trade was despised by the well-born, they 'went honourably, thinking it no shame to be merchants. They walked and sailed through deaths Ulysses never knew, and did it with cool good humour.' Even so, at Dunkirk, in 1940, the Island race proved that four centuries had not dimmed the tradition of that first Elizabeth.

From such modest beginnings—mere grains of mustard seed—sprang the far-spreading tree of the world's greatest Empire.

For close on a hundred years the East India Company lived and worked as simple traders in silks and gems and spices, on the fringe of an India rent by wars, massacres and invasions; desiring above all to keep clear of political entanglements. Yet, unknown to themselves or their country, they were men of destiny; strong in their arrogant belief that 'God Almighty's good Providence hath always graciously superintended the affairs of this Company'.

And the sequel might well seem to justify both arrogance and belief.

Certain it is that affairs in India had a more direct bearing on the Company's future than even a major prophet could then have foreseen.

The Mogul Empire, supreme and splendid under Akbar—Guardian of Mankind—was to decline rapidly under the revived cruelty and persecution of his great-grandson, Aurungzeb, who thereby lost the tacit support of the Rajputs and stirred into hostile activity the militant Marathas—a sturdy race of peasants and yeomen from the inaccessible hill country between Poona and Bombay. Under their brilliant leader, Shivaji, they soon became the terror of all neighbouring lands. Against their chain of strong hill forts, the armies of Aurungzeb exhausted themselves in vain; and his death in 1707 marked the close of an epoch.

It was in 1739 that the Persian Emperor, Nadir Shah, swept down from the North, struck a final blow at Mogul power and conquered Delhi—the tragic city. Mistress of many victors, despoiled by invading armies, she still remains in essence unconquered; but beneath the iron heel of Nadir Shah, sacked with every circumstance of brutality, she did seem to be dead indeed.

The Persians, carrying off all seizeable booty, bled the country almost white; and to Hindu princes the word went forth bidding them 'walk in the path of submission, or be blotted out from the face of creation': a threat that failed to coerce either Rajputs or Marathas.

Those cool, insatiable robbers merely proceeded to raid India more widely than ever; till the hapless people themselves—crushed by rapine and pillage, by the march and counter-march of

armies—became a masterless multitude, clinging to any power that offered protection.

Over the whole Peninsula, during those decades of anarchy, there existed no centralising influence or authority, nothing even approaching national sentiment. The Mogul despotism had kept foreign traders in their place ; but, when it fell, India lapsed into a chaos of warring merchants and plundering Princes. Everywhere the weakest went to the wall. Any ambitious man could seize a fief or principality, and hold it, till some stronger neighbour snatched it from his grasp.

Yet it was during that century of almost unrelieved darkness, that the little company of English merchants, going quietly from strength to strength, built up a thriving trade. In the course of it they had acquired Bombay, by grant from Charles II ; had founded Calcutta and other small settlements on the river Hooghly ; had safeguarded Madras by building the famous Fort St. George. Harassed by local officials and raiding Marathas, with the whole country in apparent dissolution, it soon became pike-staff plain that the Company must be prepared to defend life and goods against all comers.

It was about this time that another European trade rival appeared on the scene. While the Dutch continued their drive for monopoly, a French East India Company was building factories along the Malabar coast, and everywhere increasing its legitimate activities ; not in trade alone.

It was Dupleix, a Frenchman of genius, who made the significant discovery that a small force of Indians trained by Europeans could out-match any rabble army of Rajas or Nawabs. Here was an obvious temptation to intervene in princely quarrels and obtain political influence that might ultimately oust the English. To that end, Dupleix cleverly exploited the policy of closer relations with various Indian rulers, supporting one against another ; a policy that undesignedly led the British—not the French—along the path to Empire.

Neither Company wanted war ; but, as French influence increased, it became clear that the two could not long work in harmony. The inevitable clash occurred over political rivalry at the important Moslem Court of Hyderabad, and the Nizām's feudatory, the Nawab of Arcot, who governed Madras. Disputes over succession provided a chance for Dupleix to install men of his own choice, which led to open friction with the English Company. The French attacked the stronghold of Madras, fell back before the stubborn English defence, and opened a friendly parley with the Nawab of Arcot.

It was then that there slipped out of Madras, in Moorish disguise, a young man of one and twenty, Robert Clive by name, an underpaid clerk in the East India Company, reputed to be of a martial disposition; a reputation he affirmed with the astonishing speed of genius spurred by ambition. No more office stool for him, but an Ensign's commission, followed up by a note from the Company to those in authority: 'Be sure to encourage Ensign Clive in his martial pursuits'. The event and his own gift of leadership soon proved encouragement enough.

His 'reckless diversion'—the capture of Arcot (capital of the Carnatic), its gallant defence and ensuing victory—are well-known episodes in the story of British Indian history. As a feat of arms the Arcot victory made Captain Clive immediately famous. None could fail to recognise all that the defenders owed to the super-human valour of one man, 'who seemed to care little or nothing for his own life, and thereby won others to a like vivacity of nobleness'.

Through the play and the film 'Clive of India', his personality and dramatic story have been made more or less familiar to the English-speaking world. Reckless, ardent, ambitious, he went from triumph to triumph. His victory at Plassey led to stronger measures against French influence, and to installing in Bengal a Nawab who would favour the English. It was not conquest the Company desired, but a friendly Ruler; not territory, but trade. 'Of all the interloping European nations,' it is written, 'the English were the last and most reluctant to draw the sword even in defence.' The best among them have always recognised, like Sir Charles Metcalfe, that 'carrying their point by equity and moderation is the proudest triumph for British character'.

The prevailing policy of the time was to manœuvre for influence at native courts by the loan of European officers to train and lead their contending armies. It was the age of the Free Lance, of adventures often beyond belief. Every province fell to fighting some other province or intriguing for power. Everywhere the land was full of burning homesteads and the reek of innocent blood. No safety for any man, but in the strength of his own right arm. Between Moslem and Hindu, Rajput and Pathān raged a deadly enmity, each sect or clan aiming at the extirpation of the other. Thus the last years of the eighteenth century became known as the Great Anarchy; and at the dawn of the nineteenth century all was dark. The stars were paling. It was not by any means certain what the day was likely to be.

By that time the East India Company had become the strongest among many powers contending for provinces lost to the Mogul.

Self-preservation was the only principle on which they could deal with their neighbours ; for the powerful and predatory Marathas respected the security of no State weaker than their own. The English, in Clive's words, ' had succeeded in doing to the French all that the French had planned to do to them ' ; but, although dominant in Bengal, they had not taken over the reins of government ; and inevitably abuses crept in, that were as bad for Indians as for the Company's good name. Clearly they must either leave Bengal, and lose valuable trade, or take the responsibility of government, for which they had no taste at all.

It was then that London sent out Warren Hastings, described as ' the greatest Englishman who ever served in India '. Promptly he grasped the situation, took the reins of government and speedily evolved a more just and workable system than any Indian Province had known before his day.

In a few years, working against incredible difficulties, he used the new British power for the benefit of the people to an extent that partly atoned for the evils of an earlier reluctance to govern.

But there still remained the uncrushable Maratha chiefs, whose raids had kept the country in a turmoil for close on a century. Not only had they survived the great Afghan defeat at Paniput, but had renewed their fighting strength with a resilience all their own. Between 1775 and 1818 they fought no less than four major wars with the British. The last one amounted to a trial of strength for the prize of Empire ; and it needed all the military genius of Wellesley and Lake to smash that strong confederation.

The conflict might have been sooner ended—and British power firmly established by Lord Wellesley—but for his premature recall and the lack of vision among Home authorities : a chronic British defect which has been responsible for uncounted tragedies. In this particular case the backing of Lord Wellesley's vigorous far-sighted policy of alliance would have saved Central India and Rajputana from fifteen years of anarchy and chaos unequalled in history. The hapless Rajputs, torn almost to pieces between their main enemy and predatory banditti, were only saved from extinction by the final, hard-fought Maratha war and British victory ; their independent existence at last assured by an alliance, based on the promise of military protection, that has held good for more than a hundred years.

Seldom can peace have descended more gratefully than on those ravaged regions of Central India ; and ' the liberality of the Government ', wrote Sir John Malcolm, ' gave grace to conquest. Men were for the moment satisfied to be at the feet of generous and humane conquerors . . . and the combined effects of power,

humanity and fortune were improved to the utmost by the character of our first measures.' The major Princes became subsidiary allies; smaller vassal States gladly transferred their allegiance to unchallenged British arms. Only Sindh and the Punjab were still outside the picture.

Thus, without flourish of trumpets, the Pax Britannica was born: a power for good that, in time, evolved order and justice out of the anarchy that for decades had convulsed Central India.

Through feats of British arms and diplomacy a kaleidoscope of shifting fragments had been stilled, if only for a time. Uncertainty and tyranny had given place to a measure of stability. By an extraordinary series of chances and changes, by the genius of a few men, and the curious luck of the race, a great commercial Company had won lordship over all but the two Northern Provinces of India. Even those who know the full facts cannot easily gauge how immense was the task undertaken and achieved; nor realise that British ascendancy among those warring elements was an essential stage in their social and racial evolution.

The composite entity, resulting from that achievement, consisted of three great Provinces under direct British rule—Bombay, Bengal, Madras—and a number of Indian States—that had been either conquered, conciliated or saved from conquest—bound to Great Britain by treaty, in subordinate alliance: a relation that has no parallel in history.

The Rulers of these manifold States were given a guarantee of military protection from one another—security of succession and independence within their own borders. They, in return, must acknowledge British supremacy, must give up the right of making war on other States, or dealing with them except through the Governor-General: a policy of isolation essential, at the time, to peace and safety; though, in the event, it was carried on too long. Not yet were their treaties direct with the Paramount Power. Not yet had been created the joint political achievement of Queen Victoria and Disraeli, now known as the Indian Empire. A great upheaval—the Mutiny of 1857—was to shake the foundations of British rule before Victoria proclaimed herself Queen-Empress of India—the 'brightest jewel' in her Crown—and inaugurated the Golden Age of Britain in India: a period of fifty years and more.

Of the States themselves, their number and variety, I have already given some idea. Only certain of the major principalities can be dealt with in detail: but, from greatest to least, they all

represent different degrees of autocracy, from its better features to its worst, according to their stages of development.

In many of the smaller States one may step back hundreds of years, on leaving the railway station, into a mediaeval atmosphere incongruously enlivened by the blare of radio or gramophone, the glare of electric light. Many Chiefs of these backward States are survivals from the past that give some colour to the falsifications emitted by political-minded Indians, whose caricatures of the Princes are inevitably coloured by their own extreme bias against kingship and the British connection. Certainly not many Rulers would be likely to confirm the sweeping statement that 'British protection has destroyed their sense of responsibility, killed popular initiative and sapped the vitality of hereditary institutions'; or that personal rule 'breeds economic stagnation and social decay'. Nor would they recognise their own people as 'reduced to cringing servility and abysmal despair; rotting in a foetid atmosphere of vice and corruption: shamelessly exploited and taxed for the benefit of Palace luxuries, their hearts burning with anger and hatred against fantastic misrule'. Unfortunately such palpable distortions are too often credited by readers who forget that in bitterness of political and religious partisanship, East can give points to West.

Admittedly every form of government has its faults. There are good and bad rulers among Eastern maharajas as among Western kings; but wholesale denunciation must largely defeat its own ends. Such writers conveniently overlook the fact that the Indian Prince—autocrat though he be—is hedged about with restraints and restrictions of a religious nature; dedicated to the kingly ideal by sacred Hindu texts in his coronation oath; a dedication that counts for much in principle, if not always in practice, among six hundred or so of normal human beings, at all stages of development. The tyrannical and irresponsible Ruler, still found in backward States, cannot in justice be cited as typical. The old idea that the people exist for the Ruler has long since given place to recognition that the Ruler exists for his people.

For every case of undue extravagance one could name half a dozen Princes whose Palace expenditure is moderate if not frugal: though many of them still evince the curious Eastern craze for quantity. The father of the present Nizām bought spectacles by the hundred. They would be laid out several inches deep all over his billiard table; and he would derive an almost childish pleasure from trying on pair after pair, putting aside each one that pleased him, till the chosen ones mounted to a pile and were removed. Probably not one of them was ever put on again. There is a

Prince who owns 270 cars : with a silver-plated one for his Maharani ; and Patiala's last Maharaja had a passion for pedigree dogs, bought by the score and paid for at kingly prices, better housed and cared for than many human beings. But if a Maharaja may not indulge in a few harmless personal tastes, who may, in this mercifully variegated world ?

Most Englishmen, with personal experience of modern Indian States and personal friendship among their Rulers, would confirm the testimony of one who writes that ' emphatically the private lives of the major Princes or Chiefs of India will bear comparison with those of any corresponding number of men in high places anywhere in the world '. Indeed the more important among them could hold their own with almost any Western statesman in personal attainment and mental calibre. To do them justice they have no desire to be treated as demi-gods. That is simply the instinct of their own people. They themselves are genuinely keen to be good Rulers, as progressive as may be ; keeping in view the welfare and happiness of their subjects.

Their success in both respects has been affirmed by many Englishmen equally familiar with the States and the Provinces. They describe, in passing from one to the other, a sense of escape from the over-regulated, over-legislated British Provinces, from the monotony of the same law courts, the same schools and jail, the same schemes for sanitation, welfare and ' uplift ', not always appreciated by the custom-ridden, custom-loving East. The normal, well-run State, in fact, seems better suited to Indian taste and temperament than the efficient but unwieldy administration of British India.

The average Indian craves variety and excitement, as do most natural men and women of every race. He will take up his bed and tramp endless miles in quest of a wedding, a *méla*¹ or religious festival : anything to break the monotony of his day-to-day existence. Above all, the Raja-ruled States provide more opportunities for individual enterprise, for the swift, dramatic settling of family quarrels, for the greatest of all opportunities, a chance to make good if they have fallen from grace ; so that an outlaw, one day, may even live to become an honoured Government colleague.

But if there are high lights, there are also deep shadows. Court life, in the smaller States, impinges closely on the lives of the people ; and many of these could tales unfold that might have been culled from the Arabian Nights. Queer and exciting things can and do happen outside the law. The police may be more corrupt, justice more rough-and-ready ; but it is prompt and

¹ Fair.

personal ; less costly than interminable law-court trials, with their bribed witnesses, hired corpses and greased palms. The British themselves, in early days, recognised the merits of a swift uncomplicated code in dealing with Asiatics. Sir Henry Lawrence, whose knowledge of Indians was unique, advocated 'the very simplest form of equity, carried out by men who mix freely with the people and will do prompt justice in their shirt sleeves, rather than expound law to the discontent of all honest men'. And Sir William Barton, a high authority, expresses a doubt whether the 'complex hierarchy of Bench and Bar', now favoured by certain progressive States, will prove a real boon to the people.

Beyond everything, the normal Indian craves personal contact with his Ruler : an instinctive desire that has its roots deep in human nature. Everywhere and always intimate relations with the Ruler have been the mainspring of loyalty, as the British Royal Family has good reason to know. And the States, for all their diversity, are alike in preserving, to some extent, that cherished tradition : the extent varying with the habits and personality of the Prince himself.

Industrialism, with certain exceptions, has not yet widely spread its tentacles into the States. The village still survives as a social unit ; and the people themselves are less trammelled by hordes of officials. There is more to relieve the monotony of their days ; more fairs and public holidays with their interminable shows, their excuse for gaily-coloured garments. And the great yearly festivals, Hindu and Moslem, are celebrated with princely pomp and splendour ; prancing horses in silver harness ; outriders in royal livery, shouting 'Make way ! make way !', painted elephants in procession, their huge forms hung with cloth of gold ; the greatest among them topped by the swaying gilt howdah—a throne for the Maharaja himself.

There, uplifted, he sits in State attire, richly embroidered coat and jewelled turban, scarlet State umbrella held over him from behind—a curious adjunct of royalty that dates from early Rajput days, when the bearer of the royal umbrella rode into battle with his Maharaj, shielding him as far as might be, yet obviously making him a mark for the foe.

The college-bred student of economics may condemn these pageants and processions, implying that money wrung from starving peasants is wasted on royal vanity. To the peasants themselves and the normal Indian townsman they stand for music and dancing, colour and excitement : all that dwells in the magical word *tamāsha*. In a deeper sense they satisfy the common human need for worship, nowhere more prevalent than in the East. The

Maharaj may levy taxes ; his hand, at times, may be heavy upon them ; but he is one of themselves, bound by their traditions, his kingly rank commanding the loyalty of his people. Man, who lives not by bread alone, will neither worship nor die for economic stability or adult suffrage, least of all in India. It takes an idea to equip a human being with wings. He will die for his faith, for his King, his country or his flag. Were it ever to be otherwise, our world would indeed become 'a cattle-yard of a planet'.

It is precisely India's instinct for worship that gives peculiar significance to the intermittent visits of England's Royal Family : visits that have made the British Crown no mere abstraction but an inspiring personal force, with a peculiar appeal to the heart and imagination of India. When King George V and Queen Mary went out, as Prince and Princess of Wales, the deep impression left by their personalities was incalculable. Sir Walter Lawrence, touring with them, found less significance in the enthusiasm of cheering crowds than 'in the quiet yet compelling influence of Prince George himself' : an influence felt by all who came in contact with him.

As in the West, so, still more in the East, the survival of monarchy depends on the twin elements of kingly prestige and kingly attributes of character : a consideration that shifts our interest from the States as political units, to the men who rule them ; men who, in several instances, have almost created them as they exist to-day.

Portraits of some fifteen Princes will be attempted in this book. The remaining six hundred can only be considered in bulk : and inevitably there are many lesser Rajas untrue to the best type and tradition. But the arm of the Paramount Power is not shortened ; and if any Prince becomes notorious for gross misrule, the Viceroy has right to replace him by a more promising member of the reigning family.

The vast area covered by Indian-ruled States has been well conveyed by Sir William Barton in a paragraph that can be followed on the map :

'From the huge mountain mass of the Pamirs and Himalayas to Cape Comorin, a distance of nearly 2000 miles, one might travel almost entirely through Indian India without once entering British territory. . . . Similarly one may pass from West to East from the Indus almost to Calcutta, through a stretch of independent States.'

Large or small, backward or progressive, they may be taken as a standing proof that 'the Indian political genius has always shown

preference for the moderate-sized Kingdom, more or less the type of the Indian State to-day'.

In the early eighteen-forties there was a large measure of justice in the prevailing belief that the Indian people, as a whole, were better off under British rule than under autocratic Princes, more congenially engaged in fighting each other than in looking after their States.

Even so, men of vision and understanding, like Sir Henry Lawrence, recognised the independent State as best suited to the taste and temper of the people themselves.

It has already been shown how most of the important Rulers owed their power and security to British friendship or British arms : a fact that went far to prevent the Sepoy revolt of 1857 from spreading into a veritable Indian Mutiny.

It was the loyal help of Sikh Princes in the Punjab that enabled the stalwart John Lawrence to reinforce the British and Indian Army during the critical siege of Delhi. Column after column of military stores and ammunition travelled safely down the Grand Trunk Road, kept open by the good offices of the four ' Protected States '—Patiāla, Kapurthala, Nabha, Jhind : a signal instance of Asiatic honour upheld in the face of unparalleled temptation. Notably also a case in which British fair dealing with the States concerned brought its own reward.

No less vital to victory was the support of Moslem Hyderabad, where sympathy with fanatics of their own creed must have run high, though the people themselves are mainly Hindus. But the Nizām did not forget all that English friendship had done for the State since they rescued his grandfather from bandit Maratha chiefs. So he and his wise young Minister—the famous Sir Sālar Jung—threw all their weight into forming a loyal buffer between North and South India. In Rajputana, under Sir George Lawrence, British power and prestige were safe. Farther south, Mysore and the Marathas, with one doubtful exception, remained staunch to former friendship. Thus the day of trouble—as often happens—proved the day of reward.

3

It was after the Mutiny that a new era dawned for the Princes of India, who had either remained neutral or actively supported the British Raj.

In a happy hour Queen Victoria issued her famous proclamation as Empress of India ; removing the menace of annexation, re-affirming the former treaties and making the Princes direct allies

of the Crown. In explicit terms the Queen-Empress stated, ' We shall respect the rights and dignity and honour of the Native Princes as our own ' : and she kept her queenly word, even if those who acted for her did, at times, over-emphasise British supremacy. To her and her successors the Princes tendered their allegiance the more willingly because it was no longer given to a great trading company, but to the Sovereign of a mighty Empire.

Like the rest of India they have suffered from the five-yearly change of Viceroy, which often involves a change of policy as well as personality. In Lord Dufferin (1885) the Princes found a Viceroy of tact and understanding, the first to honour them with those regular Viceregal visits that bring them into personal touch (always a talisman in India) and improve political relations.

The corps of Imperial Service troops began with Lord Dufferin; the Imperial Cadet Corps with Lord Curzon—a true if forceful friend of the Princes, and perhaps the most variously estimated of England's many notable Viceroys. He took a genuine interest in the education of minority Princes. He did not favour public school and university for a coming Ruler; and in the Cadet Corps he provided younger sons with a useful and honourable profession. The education problem assumed a supreme importance in the case of long minorities: and it is worth noting that several of the most distinguished Maharajas were enthroned as minors and educated by English tutors on lines that prepared them for their high calling. Many virtual creators of modern States—Baroda and Mysore, Hyderabad and Bikanir—would gratefully admit the debt they owed to British tutors who became their lasting friends.

No account of India's Princes, however brief, could be complete without mention of their services to the Crown and Empire, whenever there was a fighting toward, in India or elsewhere. Most notably they rose to their supreme opportunity in 1914, when the King's stirring Call to Arms awoke instant response from all India's fighting races; while the Princes vied with each other in offers of soldierly help and personal service. Spontaneously they flung themselves, their troops, their money into the war against Germany. No effort, no cost seemed too great. Contingents of Imperial State troops, serving with the British Indian Army, helped to hold the Suez Canal, to keep watch on Sinai, and proved their mettle in General Allenby's victorious campaign.

The full tale of their contribution to the Second World War remains to be told: but from the first they have given money and service without stint. To name a few among many: the Maharaja

of Bikanir, from his desert kingdom, sent his famous Camel Corps and contributed £1000 for war sufferers in the dastardly air attacks on London. The Maharaja of Patiala also sent money and troops ; despatching the last, in Eastern fashion, with a votive offering of flowers. In a stirring speech to his people, he urged the whole Sikh brotherhood to sink their differences and rally to the fight for civilisation.

'This war', he told them, 'is our war no less than Great Britain's. In this time of crisis it is our solemn duty to make the cause of civilisation our own—the cause for which Great Britain is staking her all. *Her* success or failure will be our success or failure.'

To the Viceroy he conveyed the inflexible resolve of the Sikhs to fight to the end, 'in defence of their moral and spiritual heritage'.

These manly words are not the vapourings of an effete autocrat, bolstered up by England for her own ends. They are the words of a born Ruler who wields increasing influence over the whole Sikh brotherhood.

The Nizām of Hyderabad, very early in the day, presented the Royal Air Force with a squadron of Hurricanes that bore the name of his State and did fine work in the south-west of England : a prelude to further princely gifts that will be recorded in a chapter devoted entirely to the generous part played by India's Princes in the war.

Reverting to their normal way of life and the formalities of regal recognition, there are certain points on which every Prince of standing is extremely jealous : (1) the public indication of his precedence and prestige by the exact position of his seat at Imperial Durbars ; (2) the number of guns that make up his royal salute. Out of six hundred chiefs, only seventy-three are entitled to that coveted mark of royalty : only five of them being accorded the maximum of twenty-one guns. These are known as the twenty-one-gun Princes—Hyderabad, Mysore, Kashmir, Gwalior, Baroda. The guns of the rest are graded by twos, from twenty-one to eleven : and that traditional form of salute is dearer to them all than the Western mind can realise. It is more than a mere recognition of status. It is a matter of *izzat*—roughly rendered as prestige. But the implications of *izzat* go deeper. It includes personal honour, and is jealously guarded from any smirch or slight.

In all matters affecting salutes and seats in Durbar, Political Officers must walk delicately and season tact with understanding,

even in situations that, to Western minds, may seem to border on the ludicrous.

A case of the kind happened many years ago, when my father was Resident to a blue-blooded young Rajput Prince, whose guns were only eleven, because his State was small. To him came, on a formal visit, a thirteen-gun Raja whose lineage could not compare with that of his host. But he could boast a wealthier State and a higher salute.

On arrival, with imposing suite, he was duly installed in the Guest House, where he awaited a welcoming visit of ceremony. But the Sun-descended Rajput set his pride of birth above the other's wealth and guns. Flatly each refused to stir; nor could my father, for all his Irish gift of diplomatic persuasion, induce either of them to make the first ceremonial advance.

Baffled but amused, he recognised that this question of the first move was a serious one, and sympathetic understanding produced a happy idea. A man was told off to measure the exact distance between Palace and Guest House, and to draw a line on the open plain midway between the two. To that line each Prince could advance and meet his fellow, without either sacrificing a shred of personal prestige. Both young Princes were sufficiently enlightened to see the humour of the device: but it worked. At the half-way line they exchanged friendly greetings. The royal guest could then proceed to the Palace; and honour was satisfied.

One may smile at the childish device; but we have not the key to racial sensibilities: and Western man also has his own little weaknesses, along other lines, that must often seem childish to Eastern wisdom.

First and last there can be no sincerer tribute to the major Princes than the high esteem in which they are held by those Englishmen who have had the widest experience of them as Rulers and as individuals. Whatever their natural human failings, the best of them are great gentlemen, courteous and dignified; sure of themselves and their lineage; taking pride in their armies and the well-being of their people: increasingly ready to work with one another, for the good of their own Order and of India as a whole. The record of their long allegiance to the British Crown is an honourable record of pacts faithfully observed, of mutual friendship and esteem strengthened by the passage of time. The finest among them are men of brains and character who will go far to steady the Federal plan for India, if and when it ever assumes a workable form.

Men of diverse personality, they are one in their will and capa-

city to uphold their country's finest traditions ; one in their devotion to the Empire and in their resolve to fulfil the Empire poet's prophecy :

*So long as the Blood endures,
I shall know that your good is mine : ye shall feel that my strength is
yours ;
In the day of Armageddon, at the last great fight of all,
That Our House stand together and the pillars do not fall.*

THE PRINCES OF INDIA AND THE WAR

England, India, one together,
Thames and Ganges, East and West,
With the same foul storm and weather,
Worst, that still demands the best.
G. ROSTREVOR HAMILTON.

A PLAIN, if partial, statement of India's response to the Imperial call of 1939 and onward is worth setting down, though the tale cannot yet be told in full.

Even so, it is worth recording here how Prince after Prince, from the greater States like Hyderabad and Kashmir, down to some of the least in size and wealth, placed at the King-Emperor's disposal his personal service and the whole resources of his State. All were lavish in gifts of money and supplies. Those that have troops at once despatched them; and a number of States offered their own forces to stations in British India, thus releasing regular troops, British and Indian, for service elsewhere. Several of the Princes raised war battalions and trained recruits for the expanding of the Indian Army, besides arranging to care for the wounded in convalescent homes.

Gifts and offers of all kinds were received, literally by hundreds; and although the scope of these varied with the wealth of the donors, the same spirit was manifest in all: a spirit of unbounded generosity, enhanced by the fact that the States are not British territory nor are their people British subjects. Yet the material support given by them has reached remarkable proportions; and all are agreed that every hampering domestic and political difference should be set aside during the war; a resolve well expressed by the present Jām Sahib of Náwanagar, in the Chamber of Princes, that India must not 'fritter away her energies in other channels, when the law of the jungle threatens the basic foundations of civilisation and the ordered progress of humanity, including India and the Commonwealth'.

In their spontaneous rally to the support of the British Throne they offered help in every form, without delay and without stint. During the first ten months of the war, their gifts reached a total of £300,000, apart from recurring gifts of some £280,000 to the Viceroy's War Fund, or individual gifts that have, in some cases, amounted to £22,000 and £15,000. Twenty-eight Princes have given sums of one lakh¹ apiece: expressing in this practical

¹ One lakh = £7500.

fashion their active resolve to help in achieving absolute victory.

Where such imposing sums of money have flowed in from greatest and least, it is obviously impossible to give a complete list of all. Only a few can be recorded in detail.

To begin with the greatest and wealthiest, Hyderabad—whose Rulers have been our allies since the year 1785—the Nizām not only sent units of State troops to serve with the Army of Empire in Africa, but, immediately on the outbreak of war, his Government made a gift of £100,000 for the formation of a fighting air squadron.

It was known as the 'Hyderabad Hurricane Squadron', was constantly in action, and soon created a very fine record for itself. Its first success was gained in February 1940, when it shot down a Heinkel off the north-east coast; and during the ten days August 13th–23rd it brought down no less than twenty-four Junkers and Messerschmitts. The total enemy loss up to August 24th was thirty-four planes. His Exalted Highness may well feel proud of his fighting squadron and be assured that the cost of its creation and maintenance was well justified. The value of this gift was further enhanced by a further gift of £50,000 for maintenance and for a squadron of bombers. Another £150,000 provided a corvette for use in combating submarines.

From His Exalted Highness himself came a personal donation of £50,000 towards the cost of a fighting squadron or a corps of mechanised tanks; followed up by a further sum of £37,500 to the Viceroy's War Purposes Fund. He also arranged to give a monthly contribution of Rs.150,000 (£11,250) during the war.

That princely lead spurred his people to a like generosity. Thousands, rich and poor, sent sums ranging from a few pence to donations of £10,000. £22,500 was collected towards the cost of one Hurricane. Nobles and landowners have announced their intention of giving three more aircraft.

Such was the prevailing spirit of emulation that during the first fifteen months of hostilities the Nizām and his Government subscribed no less than £750,000, besides meeting the cost of many other activities for war purposes: a noble record for the premier State of India. And Bhopāl, India's second Moslem State, contributed £54,000 worth of American securities.

Among all the great Hindu Princes, the call to arms evoked the same eagerness to serve and to give. Mysore proved invaluable in the industrial field, followed up by large donations for aircraft and to the British Exchequer: a total amounting to six lakhs of rupees. The Maharaja of Baroda added to his earlier gift of £45,000 another £5000, for a flight of fighter aircraft.

That staunch friend and doughty Rajput, the Maharaja of

Bikanir, offered to raise and maintain six battalions of infantry, plus the services of his famous Camel Corps, under the command of his only surviving son. And his Maharani herself gave £1000 when war broke out.

'The loyalty of the Indian States', declared the Maharaja, 'has no price, nor was it a matter of bargain and barter. Such an unchivalrous attitude has never been part of the policy or creed of the Princes at the hour of the Empire's need.' Characteristically he added: 'No Rajput is ever too old to fight!'—a statement to which he has given practical proof. Though well into the sixties, he is now on active service in the Middle East, with his eldest grandson, a boy of seventeen; the first time, in the recent history of the State, that grandfather and grandson have together gone to war for their King-Emperor.

The soldierly spirit of Bikanir was reflected in a hundred other instances. From Gwalior, Indore, Alwar, Jaipur, Udaipur, Cooch Behar, Travancore (in the far South) and many more, came unending offers of service and special gifts for the purchase of fighting aircraft.

The chief Sikh States of the Punjab—Patiāla, Kapurthala, Jhind—were fired with the same generous rivalry in giving. Two Kapurthala Princes, sons of the well-known Maharaja, volunteered to serve personally, the elder having served in the last war. The Maharaja of Patiāla has already been mentioned as having urged the *Khālsa* (Sikh Brotherhood) to sink their differences and unite in rallying to the British cause. He has also raised thousands of Sikh soldiers for the Indian Army.

Several States raised war battalions; and, to take another field of service, those who had industrial facilities helped considerably to increase the output of supplies, placing technical plant and industrial machinery at the disposal of the Government for the making of munitions.

Again, many States have given valuable help in dealing with war emergencies, notably in the matter of taking over Italian prisoners after the collapse of Italy in Africa. The Maharaja of Mysore alone undertook to accommodate 20,000 of them at short notice, his favoured State not being hampered by the many difficulties of India's climate.

Everywhere, in fact, new links were forged by the spirit of united war effort: that one aim eclipsing every other, while the war endured.

In brief, India's war record, from start to finish, has proved creditable alike to her hereditary Princes and her people. It has justified the first principles of British rule, that evolved a stable

system of government and alliances from the chaos of earlier years ; that transformed enemies into loyal friends, who stood firmly beside the British Empire in its hour of need.

Though political unrealities continued to function in their limited sphere, India's fighting races, from States and Provinces, ' covered themselves with glory ' at Sidi Barrani, Keren and many decisive African engagements ; also in the Irāk, Irān and Syrian victories. The first D.S.O. presented to an Indian officer was won for great gallantry by a nephew of Sir Ranjitsinhji of Nāwanagar : an exploit fully recorded in my portrayal of that famous Prince, more widely known as ' Ranji '.

The Rulers themselves, by personal example, set a high standard before their people, appealing to them on moral grounds and urging them to lend every possible help towards victory for the Allies. Their active support of a great World Cause and the noble response of individual Princes drew from their King-Emperor on March 14th, 1941, a glowing tribute that must have fired their pride and lifted their hearts.

His telegram to Lord Linlithgow, his Viceroy, must be quoted in full :

In a message to India after the outbreak of war I expressed my confidence that in the coming struggle I could count on sympathy and support from every quarter of the Indian Continent in face of the common danger. This confidence has been fully justified, for throughout eighteen hard and anxious months the help of the Princes and people of India has been generous and unfailing.

The loyalty of the Indian Princes to their King-Emperor, on which I know that I can rely even more surely in the hour of trial, has never been more openly displayed. From the Provinces of India and the Indian States has flowed a constant and invaluable stream of men, money and material to swell the rising flood of the Empire's war resources. Moreover, while her fighting forces have been upholding, in many widely scattered theatres of war, the military traditions for which India is so justly famed, her people have been giving freely to the relief of suffering and distress.

I thank the Princes and people of India from my heart for their noble response and for their kindly sympathy. I know that the ideals for which we are fighting are as deeply cherished in India as throughout the British Commonwealth, and I am confident that the magnificent support which India has so readily and unsparingly given to the common cause will be maintained until victory crowns our arms.

GEORGE R.I.

In conclusion I would add the more recent tribute paid by

General Sir Archibald Wavell in his New Year broadcast to the people of India—January 1942.

‘India’, he said, ‘is playing a great, most honourable and increasing part in the struggle. She can look back with pride on the magnificent achievement of her troops in Libya, East Africa, Syria, Irāk, Irān, Malaya and Hong-Kong. Never has their reputation stood higher, or their exploits been more admired. Their losses, up to the present, have been comparatively light, in proportion to the results they have achieved.’

And the end is not yet.

FIVE STATES OF RAJPUTANA: LAND OF KINGS

Only that which represents an ideal to a man is permanently vitalised. . . . There are no more noble types than these Rajputs, the greatest triumph of human breeding that I know of. They are knightly through and through.—COUNT KEYSERLING.



UDAIPUR: CITY OF ISLAND PALACES

I

CERTAIN tracts of earth possess a magic intrinsically their own. Not least among them may be reckoned Rajputana, land of stirring tradition and stirring names—Udaipur, Chitor, Jōdhpur, Bikanir; each with its own proud or tragic story of 'far-off things and battles long ago'.

In the north it is a strong, unlovely desert region of sand and rock, chivalry, cruelty and daring. On its few oases Rajputs have founded kingdoms; and the long low range of the Aravāli hills divides it into unequal parts: their waters converting the southern half of the land into a region of mountains and lakes, of jungle and rocky woodland: fit setting for its capital city—immortal Udaipur.

'The beauty of Méwar is as the beauty of no other State', writes one who had seen Indian India with an eye fresh to the East. 'On occasions of welcome, its men and women, gathered on every roof, in every doorway, put all other gala decorations to shame. Udaipur does not proclaim its emotion, except with that infinitely graceful salutation of the East; hands to forehead and swaying figures, like a gust of wind sweeping a field of flowers—purple and green, scarlet and gold. Far over the plain, towards Chitor, Rajput horsemen sit erect, sword in hand, shield slung to the shoulder, streamers of scarlet, green and orange swathing their horses' heads.'

Udaipur itself—shrine of past glories, in its setting of mountain and lake—is steeped in a haunting sense of feudal times, of the age-old strife between Moslem and Hindu that colours all Rajput history, reaching its climax of tragedy and heroism in the thrice-

repeated sack of Chitor. That sacred city—once the proud capital of Méwar—crowns a high fortified rock that rises abruptly from a tangle of scrub and boulder and broken ruins fallen from above. A dirty little modern town crouches at its base ; and its vast bulk, against the brightness of morning, justifies the hackneyed simile of a great battleship breasting rough seas. Kipling began it ; and as it can hardly be improved upon, others have followed suit.

‘ The swell of the sides ’, he wrote, ‘ follows the form of a ship—from bow to stern more than three miles long and from three to five hundred feet high.’

Derelict for centuries, that proud and lonely vessel has forged through seas as rough as any in the troubled waters of Rajput history. She has survived alike the chivalry and splendour of her warrior kings, the ruthless onslaught of all-conquering Moguls, the heroism of self-immolated women and self-dedicated men, who charged through her main gates in the saffron robe of mourning ; pledged to take such terrible toll of the hated Moslem that triumph might be darkened by the price paid for it.

Three times in her history Chitor endured the horrors of siege and sacrifice, culminating in the barbarous process of sacking a conquered city : first in 1303 ; again in 1535, when thirty thousand Rajputs, in the final charge, reaped so mighty a harvest that victory did indeed become a terror of desolation.

Finally, in 1567, Akbar himself, a youth of five and twenty, sought alliance with his kingly neighbours : a wise move that would have saved Chitor. Unhappily his offer was flouted by the least kingly of Rajputs, Udai Singh. So he, that might have come as an ally, came to conquer where he could not conciliate ; and the despicable Udai Singh, absent from his capital, did not return when the flower of Méwar arrived post-haste to defend Chitor.

But Rajputs have never lacked a leader ; and his place was taken by sixteen-year-old Putta Singh, who fought and died in his saffron robe, his widowed mother and girl-wife beside him, lances in their hands, fighting like men.

Many girls, barely old enough to marry, fought to the death that day beside warriors who might otherwise have been their bridegrooms. But courage, heroism and sacrifice were unavailing against Akbar’s hordes. Once again the command was given for the last tragic rite of *johur*. Then did nine Queens, carrying their cherished infant sons, followed by some thirteen thousand Princesses and women, descend into the caverns below the Palace, where funeral pyres had been set alight for those who proudly faced the devouring flame rather than live to sate the lust of the conqueror.

Above them, in the doomed city, eight thousand men, in saffron robes, charged once more through the gates to give and receive death, in the last indomitable onslaught that made Chitor a shrine of valour and a place of desolation for ever.

'By the sin of the sack of Chitor' passed into the language as the most solemn oath that any Rajput can utter. And Akbar rightly, in later years, recorded his admiration of that last heroic defence by placing, at the gate of his Delhi Palace, two statues of the young Rajput leaders Putta and Jaimul of Bednor—names that will live while Rajasthan endures.

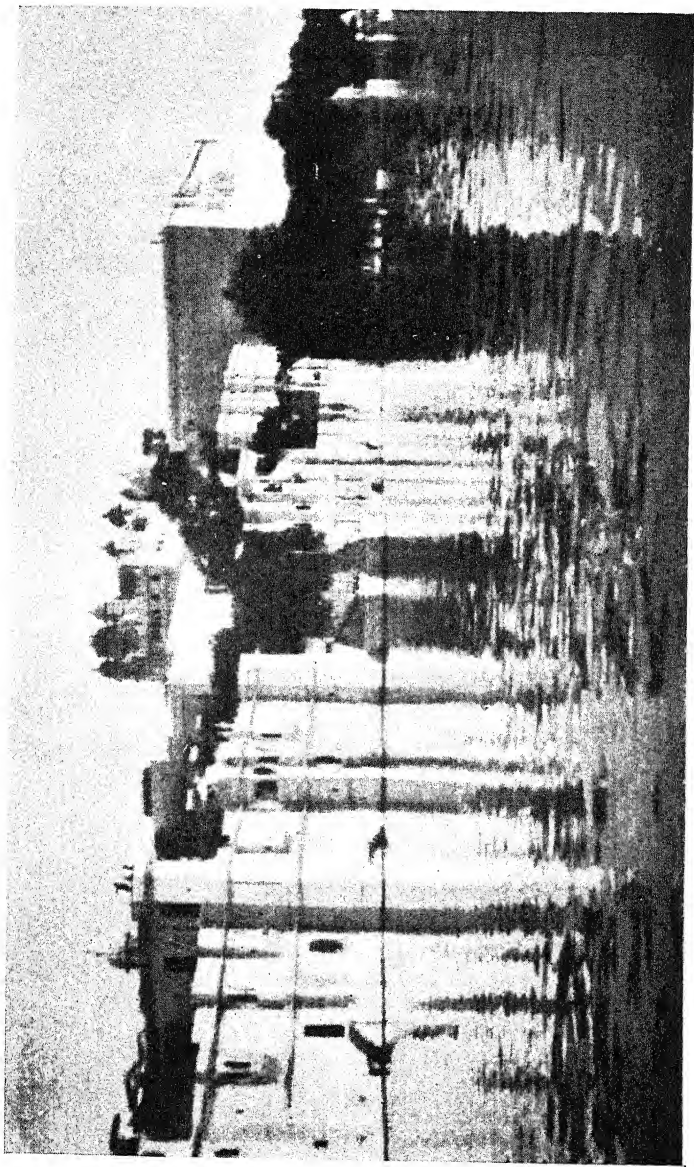
Chitor itself—the 'widowed city'—still remains a living centre of Hindu faith, as it once was the cradle of Hindu chivalry. There the sun is still worshipped daily in a temple more than a thousand years old; while Udaipur is, even to-day, the stronghold of a tradition so remote and undisturbed as to startle our mushroom vanities.

The Rajputs themselves—though forced in the end to make terms with Delhi—have remained in essence unconquered. According to Captain James Tod—their devout biographer—they present 'the sole example of a people withstanding every outrage that barbarity can inflict, from a foe whose religion commands annihilation; bent to earth, yet rising buoyant from the pressure, making of calamity a whetstone for courage'.

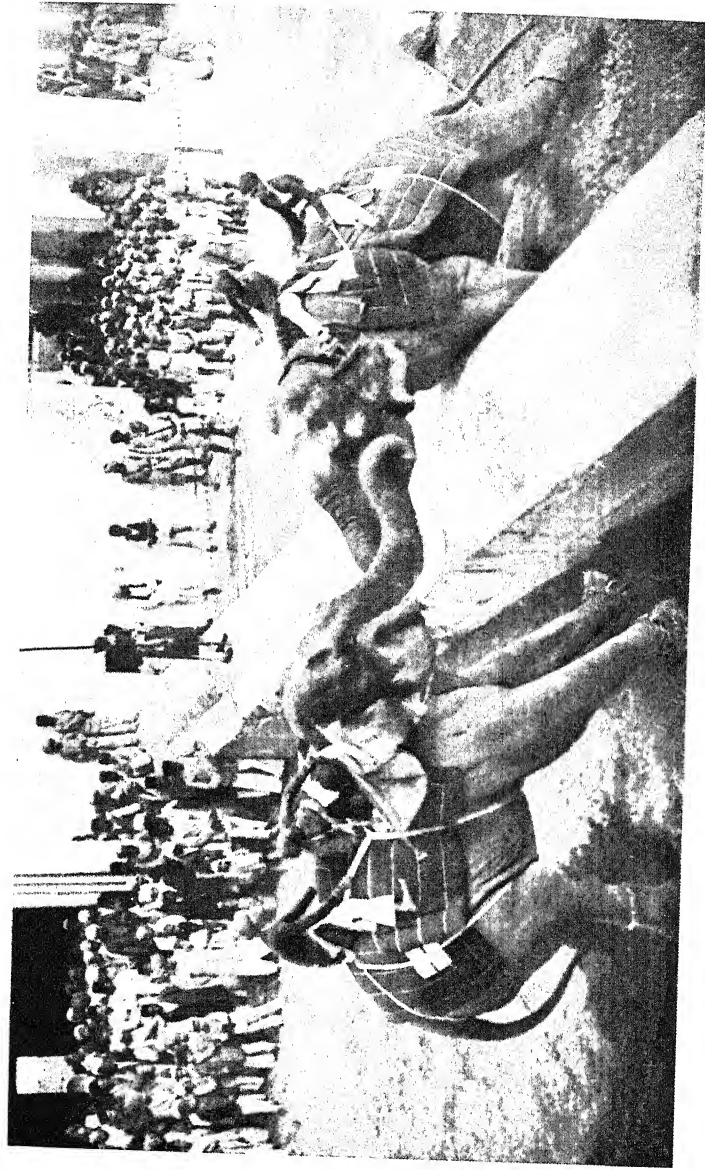
When Tod wrote those words, he had no foreknowledge that his tribute to Rajputs might, centuries hence, prove apt to the undefeatable spirit of Poles and Czechs, rising buoyant from the pressure of cruelties unmatched even by the worst that Moslem fanaticism could inflict on a prostrate yet unbeaten foe.

As for the despicable Udai Singh, who shirked the defence of his capital, it was he who, by a strange fatality, built Udaipur, immortalising thus his own dishonoured name. There he made a vow that, while Chitor remained 'a widow', Rajputs would never twist up their beards; never eat off anything but leaves, nor sleep on anything but straw. And centuries after, the Rānas of Udaipur, in their own fashion, still honour his vow: sleeping in sumptuous beds—laid on straw; eating off gold and silver plates—laid upon green leaves: and never twisting their beards. That typical Eastern evasion was recorded by their sincere admirer, Sir George Birdwood, in 1915. Whether the vow is still so curiously kept, only the present Maharāna and his court could reveal: and no doubt they would rightly consider it their own private affair.

The Rajputs of Méwar—neither tribe nor clan, but a military caste—claim descent from the Sun, through Rāma the god-hero of India's sacred epic the *Rāmāyāna*. To quote Sir William Barton:



UDAIPUR : THE PALACE FROM PICHOLA LAKE



UDAIPUR : ELEPHANTS WRESTLING WITHIN THE ROYAL PALACE
(From *India of the Princes*, by Rosita Forbes)

'From the Himalayas to the border of Madras, Rajputs have governed kingdoms and principalities for two thousand years. No other race has such an unbroken continuity of rule. Even to-day, these proudest of India's princes rule one-tenth of the land.'

Warriors all—of the Kshattriya caste, that is second only to the Brahmin—they have had their fill of battle and murder and sudden death. From earliest recorded times, Rajasthān has been the Flanders of India : torn and ravaged not only by the greater wars against Mogul and Maratha, but by perpetual feuds and jealousies among their thirty-six royal houses. These fought one another, as royal houses know how to do, brother against brother, son against father : a tangled tale of force, fraud and cunning, desperate love and more desperate revenge ; crimes worthy of demons and virtues fit for gods.

Yet, for all their human mingling of good and ill, the indubitable fact remains that these astonishing Rajputs—India's oldest aristocracy—did create a new form of Indian chivalry ; that their Rulers did preserve, through all vicissitudes, the religion, the culture and traditions of the Aryan age.

In a practical fashion, by rigid rules of life and marriage, they preserved their own integrity as a sacrosanct military caste ; the only Hindu caste with any quickening and controlling traditions of political power and responsibility.

To-day, having survived the storms of centuries, they form the main bulk of Indian States. They affirm the vitality of the kingly system and the peculiar fitness of one-man rule for a people who will always follow an individual rather than a cause. 'In blood, brawn and bone,' wrote Sir George Birdwood, 'in their ineradicable virility they are one and the same Aryan people as ourselves' ; their failings offset by courage and a keen sense of honour, by pride of race and passion for freedom.

Let it not be forgotten—as by them it never is—that these virile Rajputs did virtually save Hindu India from the flood of Moslem invasion ; that they have given her the most enduring of her political institutions, the feudal Rajput State. In this twofold achievement lies their main title to renown : and that same feudal system, based on the bed-rock of human nature, might even now be adapted to the needs of a progressive age.

Apart from all that, their history is full of colour, vitality and unquenchable courage, whether in victory or defeat. Long before Akbar, their conquering armies had reached the Himalayas and set up an Aryan dominion all over Northern India. Kashmir itself is still Rajput-ruled : and many old Rajput families remain in the Himalayas and in the Punjab. Forced to make terms with Akbar,

after the final tragedy of Chitor, they continued to hold their own under the son of that worthless Udai Singh : a son who livingly embodied Rajput chivalry and courage—Rāna Partāp Singh. No easy Palace life for him : no inglorious peace with the Moguls. Till victory returned to the Sun-descended, he decreed that the war-drums of his army should march behind instead of in front. For twenty years he lived roughly as a soldier in the wilds of Méwar ; he and his followers actually sleeping on straw and eating off leaves. He fought and conquered Raja Mān Singh of Jaipur, refusing to dine with him because one of Jaipur's daughters had been given as a bride to Akbar. He won back most of Méwar ; but he could not revive thrice-murdered Chitor.

While Akbar lived, comparative peace prevailed. Inherently noble, he aimed at dissolving all religious and social barriers between man and man : an achievement beyond even one of the greatest Emperors of all time. Illiterate to the last, he made others read to him ; and he learnt to understand the minds of men by slipping out of his Palace at night in disguise, wandering through street and bazaars, mingling with the crowd, talking, listening and watching their behaviour, especially that of Hindus. Unable to wean these from their age-old creed, he could and did advance them to his highest State appointments, where they served him faithfully, while maintaining their own beliefs and customs.

But Akbar's nobility and tolerance died with him. Under his great-grandson Aurungzeb, fanatical persecution again reared its evil head. An orgy of destruction and desecration of Hindu temples dishonoured a truly imperial line and brought it to an ignominious end.

For, as Mogul power waned, the pirate Princes of Central India came down from strongholds in the Western Ghauts under their brilliant leader, Shivaji. Later still, in the dark days of anarchy and chaos, it was these same bandit chiefs who persistently harassed and often conquered all regions north, east and west of their own. More especially they menaced the Rajputs, fighters of equal prowess, handicapped by inter-State jealousies and intrigues. Recklessly independent, proud and vengeful, they were never able to combine effectively against the common foe. The whole region of Méwar was scoured from end to end ; lovely Udaipur squeezed like an orange : a process from which it had barely recovered more than a hundred years later. The Marathas might, in fact, have seized all Rajputana, but for the rising power of British arms, and the military genius of Lake and Wellesley, to whom, ultimately, the States of Rajasthān owed their very existence.

By an evil fate, when the Maratha peril was at its height—in 1805—Mêwar was held by a weak and incompetent Ruler, as in the last fatal days of Chitor : and thereby hangs a tale of tragedy that has thrown a lasting shade of melancholy over the princely House of Udaipur.

The tragedy sprang from a quarrel between the Princes of Jaipur and Jōdhpur, rivals for the hand of a young and lovely Udaipur Princess, daughter of a worthless father, Bhim Singh. At the age of twelve she was betrothed to the Prince of Jōdhpur ; and when he died the bride-to-be was claimed by his successor, on the specious plea that her betrothal was not merely to the Prince but to his throne of Jōdhpur.

Now it so happened that his claim had been successfully forestalled by the debauched and effeminate Prince of Jaipur. Here was matter for fierce rivalry between two warlike States, both swift to seize any excuse for flying at each other's throats.

Incredible as it sounds, all Rajputana was convulsed, for seven long years, by that fierce battle for the hand of Udaipur's child-Princess—famous everywhere for her beauty and charm. Like another Helen, she became the cause of wholesale death to half the youth and valour of the land ; each Chief or Prince taking sides in the conflict.

Sindhia, Maharaja of Gwalior, supported Jōdhpur and laid siege to Udaipur. The poor-spirited Rāna, alarmed by the storm he had raised, appealed at last to Lord Lake, begging the British to intervene : a move that was prevented by a ' cruel and ignorant order from England ', where the tragic facts were probably neither realised nor understood. British refusal hastened the fatal climax. Bhim Singh, hard pressed by rival claimants, yielded at last to the brutal demand that he should either give his daughter to the rightful bridegroom, or have her murdered so that none might possess her. By that time she was nineteen—pure Greek in the grace of her perfected loveliness ; a second Iphigenia ; for her craven father, fearing the vengeance of Jaipur if he gave her to his rival, chose the cruel alternative—death in cold blood for his own daughter.

The order was given ; but no man in the Palace household could be found to use a dagger against defenceless youth and beauty. So the dire deed was entrusted to the women of the harem, who must persuade or compel the Princess to drink a draught of poison.

In the event, there was no need for compulsion. The spirit of that young girl shamed the cowardice of her own father. Obediently she accepted the decree that would bring peace to her

loved country. It was she who comforted the wailing women, when her mother, shaken with grief, proffered her the deadly drink.

Dressed as a royal bride, she calmly looked out over the serene Pichola Lake and its island palaces, lifted the bowl and cried out gallantly, ' *This* is the bridegroom destined for me '.

Then she fell down in a fatal swoon at the feet of her weeping handmaids : and, in dying, made her name immortal. Even now the heroine of Méwar is a theme for Rajput ballad-makers and poets.

The cruel, senseless tragedy stirred all India ; stirred even distant, uncomprehending England to belated horror and remorse. A weak Home Government had much to answer for in those dark days. Timidity and lack of vision among responsible Home authorities condemned Central India and Rajputana to fifteen years of anarchy and chaos almost unprecedented in history.

It was the Marquis of Hastings—India's seventh Governor-General—who was chosen to carry out a more virile policy of active intervention, to save Rajputana and ensure British supremacy in that part of India. Then were the harassing banditti destroyed, Gwalior isolated, the power of British arms reasserted by victory after victory, under the fine generalship of Sir Arthur Wellesley ; till, in 1818, the Marathas were finally defeated ; and all India, except the Punjab and Sindh, acknowledged British dominion. Gratefully the rescued Rajputs contracted a protective alliance with the power that had saved them from annihilation and secured their independence for ever.

Since that day—a hundred and twenty-two years ago—they have dwelt secure in their many States, great and small ; too secure, perhaps, for a soldier race of men who regard war, religiously, as ' an open door to heaven '.

Undeniably the protectorate, by abolishing risk of war, tended to sap the virility of Rajput manhood and weaken its moral fibre. The great nobles, a fine body of men, grown richer and more prosperous, found themselves left with no practical *raison d'être*. Yet, taking them all round, they have remained true to their tradition of chivalry, courage and sportsmanship.

Certain Indians, who can perceive no merit in British rule, insist that it has emasculated India and her princely families. No doubt there are many regrettable cases in point, since every good is shadowed by its attendant ill ; but to postulate lack of courage in the protected Indian States is to libel the race. The great days of Indian knighthood may be past, but the spirit of it survives—and will survive.

In these days, one need only mention names as familiar as Sir Pratāp Singh, Sir Ganga Singh of Bikanir, the young Princes of Jaipur and Jōdhpur, who probably give the measure of hundreds less widely known. Undeniably, in long periods of peace and prosperity, the men of most races tend to grow effete and comfort-loving. But when the trumpet-call 'To Arms' challenged British and Indian manhood—as in the years of the First World War—their instant response proved that it was not dead, but sleeping. In 1914 the soldier races of India vied with each other in readiness to defend their one-time defenders; even as our own over-civilised young men—on land and sea and on the wing—proved over and over all the ingrained qualities that are 'for ever England'.

Generations may come and go, standards of faith and courage and leadership may rise and fall, but the spirit of race is immortal, renewed from age to age in those great men who most shiningly embody it—'and their name liveth for ever more'.

2

Thus, through the vicissitudes of a history as brave, tragic and stirring as any on earth, we come to comparatively modern Udaipur. Steeped in tradition, remote and serene among its lakes and hills, it has made less obvious progress, in the accepted sense, than the other great cities of Rajasthān. Partly this has been deliberate; a refreshing change from the persistent pursuit of progress elsewhere. No Rāna of Udaipur has been to Europe; and the city's unusual beauty, its feudal atmosphere, have been safeguarded by one of its most distinguished Maharānas, the late Sir Fateh Singh, himself the embodiment of Rajput royalty with his height, his fine features and his cleft beard. In full Durbar, surrounded by his nobles, he might have stepped straight out of the twelfth century; and during his rule, the duties and privileges of feudal times were strictly enforced. Even now the peasant ploughs his land with the Rajput shield strapped to his shoulders, and with sword or spear at his side. The whole setting of city and Palace harmonised with the picturesque figure of its revered Ruler.

A life of austerity and restraint so preserved his vigour and energy that he could stick pig and shoot tigers up to late middle age. Stoutly he refused to let the 'fire carriage' enter his sacred city, that is like no other on earth. The railway ends in a small station three miles off. Only cars and carriages, horses, elephants and camels can fitly enter through the tall Gate of the Sun studded with iron spikes; a relic of distant days when the elephant's head

was used as a battering-ram. In the same spirit he chose to use the waters of Udaipur for adornment rather than for irrigation ; preferring, no doubt, that its people should die of no drains, rather than of too much efficiency.

When apostles of progress asked why he did not develop his State, he would answer with his unemphatic courtesy : ' I am Rajput : soldier and sportsman. Not bunnia.'¹

Something of the old heroic spirit breathed in his resistance to change ; ' something immense and pathetic ', wrote Miss Fitzroy, ' in the challenge he flung to those new forces that the West cannot control and dare not defy '. Behind his aloof and exquisite manner there lurked a strain of melancholy ; a shadow of the curse that is said to rest on Udaipur ever since that young and lovely Princess was sacrificed to avert the threat of war.

' He had '—wrote Sir Walter Lawrence, who knew him as well as any could know a being so remote—' the most perfect manners in the world ; gracious and inscrutable alike to all. It was interesting to watch the effect of that wonderful manner on diverse persons. Even the great Lord Curzon fell under its charm. Little might be said, but much was conveyed in the atmosphere of that noble presence. It was a privilege merely to sit with him.' Nor could any ever guess what he really thought of the polite strangers from the West, who talked, in well-meaning ignorance, of things they could not know ; things that none could know unless the blood of Rajputs ran in his veins.

But there needs no Rajput heritage to awaken a responsive stir of mind and imagination at the first sight of Udaipur—one of the few experiences, in a land of wonders, that can be counted on to better expectation.

The glory of that unbelievable city may be of the past ; her beauty remains inextinguishable, while two and a half miles of steel-blue water mirrors her infinite variety, and the setting sun baptizes with light and colour the dead-white walls of Palace and city and marble *bund*. Massed trees, against the brightness, glow darkly as if carved in jade ; and as light fades colour deepens. Water turns to wine, reflecting island palaces, more dream than reality, in that flaming end of evening that fades too soon into a ghostly dusk. So much breath-taking beauty everywhere, that details escape the eye, lost in wonder at the whole. There is nothing quite like it anywhere.

Aloof and impenetrable, as Sir Fateh Singh himself, that imposing pile of marble and shorn granite seems to breathe the haughty spirit of Rajput valour and pride of race : grey-white

¹ Shopkeeper, moneylender.

houses, domes and towers, fretted balconies and the royal zenana building a precipice of blind white wall, its foundations set deep in water.

From this oldest part, the rest seems to lean back in bastions, terraces and winding stairs, crowning the ridge along all its lifted length : a profusion of exquisite detail that almost defeats design. Has anyone ever tried to count the minarets, the fretted windows, the arches, the balconies ?

Drained of colour in the brief dusk, it looms majestic ; a shrine of the kingly ideal rather than of kings human and fallible. Its true period long past, it continues its magnificent existence unconcerned. Guarding its human secrets, tragic and squalid and heroic, it remains at this late hour a stately symbol of autocracy in a reeling world.

More than a symbol it was to the eighty-year-old Maharāna, who ruled his kingdom as absolutely as any old-time autocrat, however benevolent : no authority other than his own ; no system of finance ; no supervision of local officers. Here was fertile soil for intrigue and political agitation directed from Ajmir. These gave rise to so much trouble among the indigenous tribes that the Government, regrettably, felt obliged to curtail the powers of India's most revered Ruler ; as loyal at heart as he was splendid in aspect. That drastic measure caused no small alarm among his fellow Princes ; and embittered, not without reason, the last years of his own life.

During those years the State was practically ruled by his son Sir Bhupāl Singh, who needed a large measure of tact and forbearance to pull him through the difficult position in which he was placed by the Paramount Power.

By one of Nature's ironical twists, the son of that magnificent figure of a man is slight and frail and partially paralysed ; true Rajput, in that he has refused to let that cruel disability hinder him from moving about his State on business and shooting expeditions. Though he can never be a rider, he is a first-rate shot ; and occasionally he entertains distinguished strangers from England. But, like his father, he has never crossed the sea and very seldom travels beyond his own borders. Perhaps because of his bodily limitation, he possesses a curiously subtle brain ; and there are not many who can penetrate the shell of his reserve. He seldom visits Delhi ; cares very little for politics and less than nothing for the Chamber of Princes, an assembly favoured by few of the greater ones, who pride themselves on their personal relation to the British Crown.

With the passing of youth—he is over fifty-five—his life has

been more or less restricted to the ample confines of his vast and varied Palace, almost a town in itself ; with its own store-houses, farmyards and wells ; as large if not larger than the city that climbs to it up the hillside from the Gate of the Sun. There gaily-painted houses lean towards each other across narrow winding streets thronged with the mixed, leisurely traffic of the East ; scarlet horsemen with small turbans and large curved swords ; golden-skinned women of the desert crowned with brass lotahs ; children everywhere and chickens and stray dogs ; milk-white bulls, privileged and sacred ; panniered camels with drooping underlip and scornful eye. Now and again, shouldering through the crowd, comes the vast bulk of an elephant flapping impossible ears. And everywhere a kaleidoscope of colour—amber, vermillion, orange, purple and palest green.

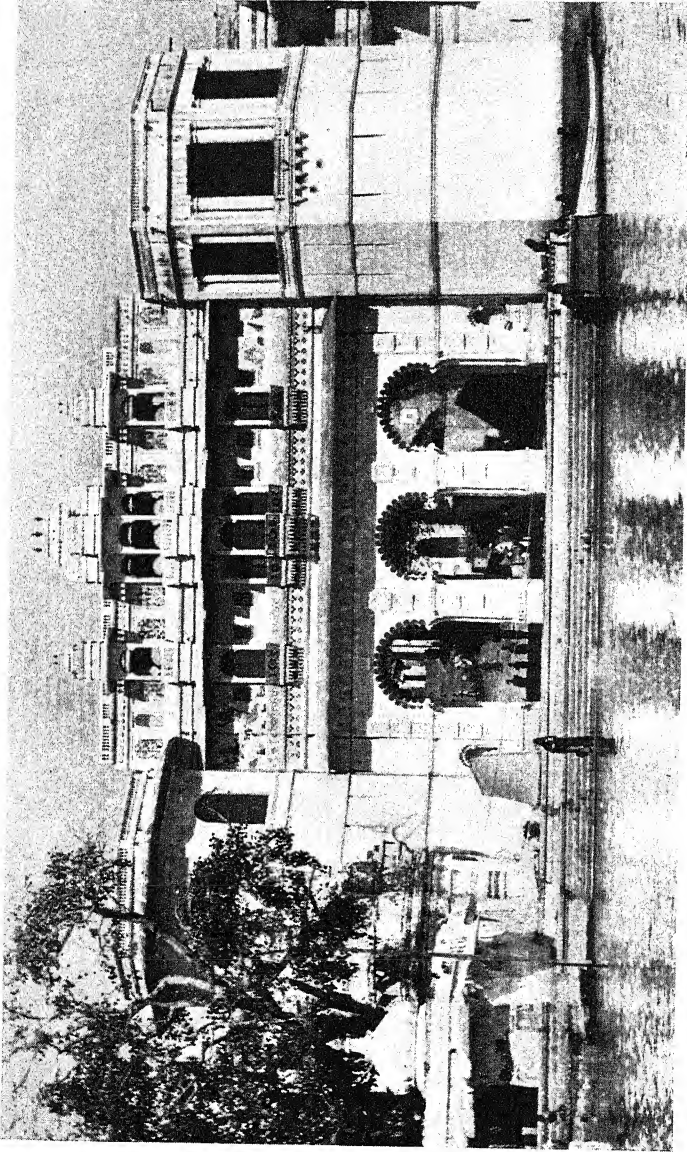
There we have the very aspect and atmosphere of feudal India, rooted in the past, centuries removed from hybrid Bombay : and at dusk silver bells ring the fairy city to rest.

Sun-drenched streets and shrines and temples climb up and up to the Palace, epitome of power in possession ; and not far from it, symbol of spiritual power, rises the mighty cone of Jagadēsh temple, carved from base to summit with a confused mingling of gods and goddesses, monsters and men.

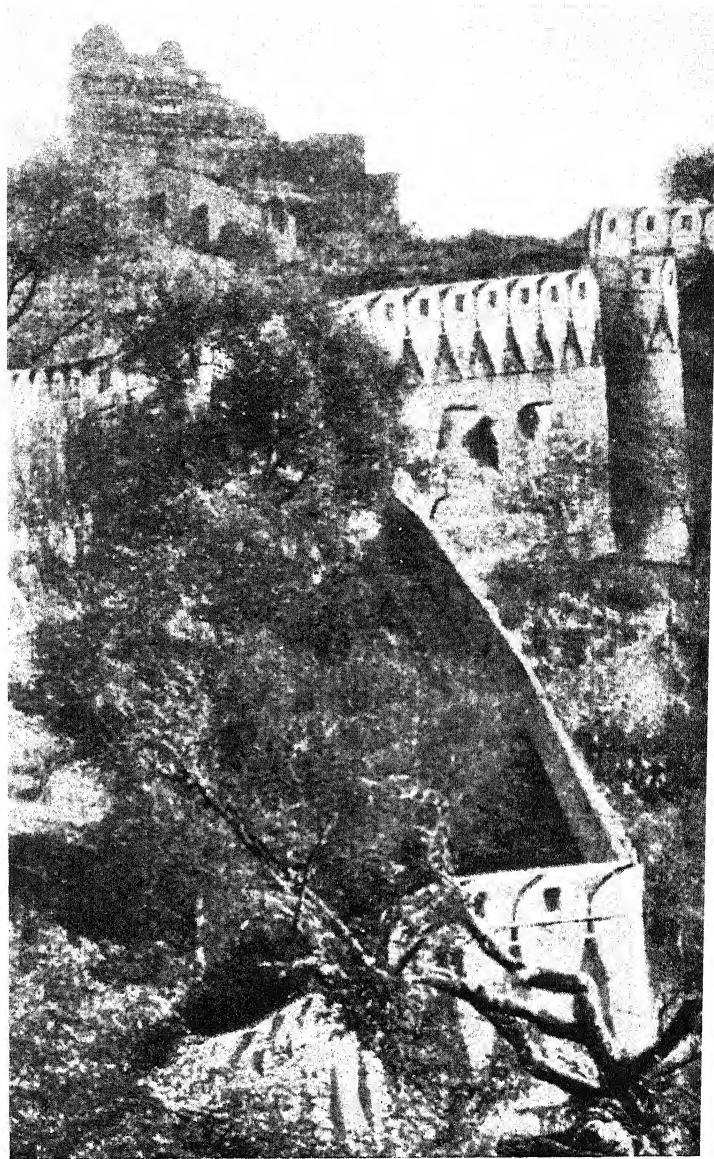
Outside that curiously self-contained world, politicians may wrangle and non-violence violently rage, Hindus and Moslems may annihilate each other, so long as the sons of Kings hold their own land and a descendant of Rāma rules in Udaipur.

Up and up, till at last one reaches the outer Palace ; the great gateway leading into a courtyard crowded, like the streets, with the varied animal population of India : monkeys, camels, donkeys, and again the sacred bull *en famille* ; the jewelled gleam of peacocks—royal birds of Rajasthān—self-consciously sunning their splendour on coping or battlement. Here also the royal elephants are picketed, monsters of flesh and sinew nervous of their own bulk, meekly obedient to slips of brown men whom they could kill at a stroke. High above the spacious open roof over the wide gateway looms the main bulk of the Palace, blinding white against the blue. Below it—far below—gleams the silver shield of Pichola Lake, with its island palaces and fringe of wooded hills ; one bold outline cleaving the sky.

The Palace itself, behind imposing walls and towers, seems quite another world. Curiously haphazard and lacking in design, it has the fascination of some fairy-tale castle ; a maze of low doorways and twisting stairs ; little secret rooms and blind courtyards ; glimpses of sunlit lake and sky through carven arches ; a



UDAIPUR : ENTRANCE TO THE WATER PALACE
(High Commissioner for India)



UDAIPUR : RUINED CITY OF CHITOR

(From *Great Men of India*)

small open terrace, shaded with orange trees, and a splash of scarlet uniforms—peons lounging on guard.

Up a ladder-like staircase cut in the wall, you may climb to one of the many-arcaded towers, where His Highness, Sir Bhupāl Singh, sits cross-legged, Indian fashion, in English garb and expensive English boots that never touch the ground. Here he receives his few European guests talking to them in fluent English, untravelled though he is. From his eyrie, he looks down upon a wide fair view of lake-side and city and low hills, merging into a troubled sea of mountains that range northward to Mount Abu and Ajmir.

There remains one aspect of Udaipur that should, if possible, not be missed—the yearly celebration of the Dewāli Festival, Feast of Lights, when Lakshmi, Goddess of Fortune, is worshipped in the living gold of fire and the dead gold of minted coin; when women worship their jewels and each man worships the tools of his trade, tossing coins or dice to discover his luck.

And at sunset, when a breeze ripples the lake, young girls go in groups down to the water, each carrying her *chirāgh*, the lamp of life, a cotton wick alight in a clay saucer of oil. These they set afloat on lake or tank, praying that Mai Lakshmi may guide them safely to the farther shore. If the prayer is heard, omens are good. If the little *chirāgh* be wrecked or broken, omens are evil. So—apart from the beauty and wonder of its elaborate illuminations—it is a feast of intensely human significance in a land saturated with superstition. And it culminates, after sundown, in a fairy-like illumination hardly credible in this machine age.

For weeks beforehand every potter's wheel is turning out little *chirāghs* by the thousand, each with its lip in which the cotton wick may rest. These are placed, edge to edge, everywhere along roofs and walls and balconies; along places possible and impossible, to await the moment of nightfall on that day of days.

As the flaming sunset dies into the brief dusk of India, city and palaces and island pavilions appear to stand like ghosts under a darkening sky. Then the first thin points of fire flicker and waver, 'dancing alive from nothing, lovely and mad'. Deepening from amber to gold, the little blown flames run along walls and window-frames, over roof and arches, as if they caught fire from each other; so skilful and swift are the unseen hands at work. More lights, and more, spring to life everywhere; thousands, tens of thousands, till the transformation scene is complete. Palaces, temples, islands, even boats by the shore—the whole of Udaipur blossoms on darkness, in flickering delicate lines of fire. Flame palaces float on the waters of an enchanted lake, where stars are put out by a

restless shimmer of gold that seems hardly to be of earth.

Slowly, as night deepens, the quavering lights burn low and lower, till the magic scene dies out, leaving Palace and city and lake just visible in the ghostly gleam of starshine and a waning moon. The fairy scene, that dazzled the eye with its wonder, is eclipsed by the immortal beauty of the heavens that lifts the mind to worship and speaks direct to the soul.

The goddess of Fortune should surely favour her votaries who worship her with this yearly unforgettable vision of all Udaipur, printed in fire on the night sky of Rajasthān.